February 1988 No. 6

1988 Volleyball Season Opens

The 1988 Western Bioregion League volleyball season opened with the first sunny day of 1988. League spokesperson Susan Erkel Ryan announced the opening of the season with her beloved ear-shattering cry of "Volleyball!" after the court reemerged from its annual winter rain submersion.

In opening day ceremonies, Ryan was voted into the Reserves Hall of Fame following her retirement from the Whole Earth Review staff, and League officials welcomed several new players to the Conference.

Players feared the season might be abruptly cancelled when the ball disappeared following the second game. But, thanks to Murphy's Law, the ball magically re-appeared after a new one had already been purchased, and the season was saved. Play promises to sharpen up after the first few rolls of deep winter fat are removed from the players or Labor Day, whichever comes first.

Whole Earth Learning Disk Project Completed

The second and final phase of the Apple Computer/Whole Earth Hypercard demonstration disk project has been completed. The project, which compiled a version of Essential Whole Earth Catalog on disk (and from there to a CD), generated much publicity (and much-needed funds) for Whole Earth.

The making of the computerized Catalog was described by Kevin in the last issue of the *Review*. Perhaps the most intriguing change to the existing text and graphics Catalog format was the addition of an audio dimension to the reviews. Thus, for example, one could read the review of a company that distributes blues records, and then listen to several excerpts from various blues artists whose records are distributed by the company.

Apple will now manufacture a CD version of what's being called the "Whole Earth Learning Disk" which will be distributed through its channels. We, meanwhile, are shopping for someone to publish a CD version in full. What we seem to have here is the classic "waiter and menu" problem: [*Customer:* "Waiter, why is there no chicken on the menu?" *Waiter:* "Because no one ever orders it."] There are very few interfaced CD player/computers in existence, hence a small market for a publisher. But consumers don't want to buy CD players if there is nothing for their computer to play on them.

Meanwhile, back at the chicken ranch, Keith Jordan will be heading for Seattle to demonstrate the disk at Microsoft's CD conference and search for signs of intelligent life in the CD publishing universe.

Whole Earth Editor Warns of Peril to Planet

Live at Six on Seven! This just in: a computer virus designed by adherents to a loose-knit philosophy called the Church of the Subgenius is creating an uproar on the nation's largest computer information system whose managers fear the bug may cause widespread destruction. The virus simply causes the display a "Universal Message of Peace to all Macintosh users around the world."

Yes, who else would get the call for background information on the Church of the SubGenius than the Bay Area's intrepid expert on all things loose-knit, Kevin Kelly. Kevin was seen live on the local ABC affiliate evening news, where he fielded rapid-fire questions on camera from the probing minds of Channel 7. (The Church of the SubGenius was featured in WER's "Fringes of Reason" issue (#52)). The Church is preparing a response, in which they confess that due to their longstanding policy of claiming responsibility for things they are not responsible for, they are happy to be accused of this. They also confess that although the message is one of peace, there is a subliminal message designed to stimulate hostility and destruction in all humans who view it.

P.S. The above is a true story. Honest.

SCIENTISTS AGREE EARTH TIME IS SHORT!!!

TWO NEW WHOLE EARTH BOOKS IN THE WORKS

Contracts are being drawn up with New York publisher Harmony Books (an imprint of Crown) for the publication of two new Whole Earth books: *Fringes* and *Signal*. Both books are based on special issues of the Review published recently, and will be graphically designed to convey the look and feel of the Whole Earth Catalogs.

Ted Schultz, who guest-edited the special "Fringes of Reason " issue of WER will expand his mass of weird stuff to book length. Subtitled *The Whole Earth Guide to Strange Beliefs and Eccentric Science, Fringes* will be delivered to the publisher in the Fall for publication in 1989.

Signal, which is due to the publisher in July for publication in the Fall 1988 season, is based on the recent special issue of the *Review*. The book's working subtitle is *A Whole Earth Catalog: Access to Communication Tools and Information Frontiers* and it promises to extend the information contained in the magazine.

Due to the tight timeline and the immense amount of work involved, a special team of editor/writers has been hired to whip Signal into shape. Returning to Whole Earth for the project is David Finacom, who last worked here as access yeoman on the *Essential Whole Earth Catalog*. Joining him are Sally Vandershaf, who comes to us as a science writer late of Time-Life, and Richard Kadrey, author of, among other things, an Ace Books sci-fi thriller titled *Metrophage*.

The team is working steadily if not frantically toward their deadline. When a pile of handwritten notes on 3x5 cards began to levitate off David's desk is response to thermal winds from our ceiling mounted gas heater/blower, proofreader Hank Roberts quipped that we had almost succeeded in generating a "hard desk crash." It promises to get even more exciting as deadline draws near.

MacSUB Promises Readers Fulfillment With a Personal Touch

Hang on to your subscriptions, folks, we're about to change our fulfillment system again. After agonizing over an increase in subscriber complaints at the end of last year, we came to the realization that we had outgrown the abilities of the company which currently maintains our subscriber list. Rather than jump once again to another outside firm and attempt to extract from them the level of service we think our readers deserve, we decided to take the bull by the horns and do it ourselves.

This is now possible due to the development of a sophisticated MacIntosh-based subscription fulfillment program called MacSUB. Is this yet another version of software panacea? We think not. Many of the things we have only dreamed of can be accomplished with this system: real-time customer service, accurate subscriber names and addresses, useful reports on the state of our subscription health, and the elimination of complaints and work created by the errors of outsiders for whom we are, alas, just another magazine.

Paul Davis will direct the conversion process, which is expected to be completed in a couple of months. At that point, the buck will begin and end here, a moment Paul and the rest of us are looking forward to with a sense of glee. There are bound to be a few glitches in the transition (heh,heh), but we are excited at the prospect of being able to provide personal and responsive service to all our loyal readers.

Ryan Resigns to Reap Rayon

Susan Erkel Ryan, longtime Production Manager, announced her resignation, a move that brought relief to deadline violators everywhere and a note of sorrow to those of us who know her as a friend. Susan has been studying the field of fabric and has hopes of opening a small fabric business in Sonoma county some day.

Susan first came to work at Whole Earth as a proofreader for *CoEvolution Quarterly* in 1981, and quickly established herself as triple threat team player: production manager, volleyball slammer and staff birthday coordinator. Known for her easy-going, cooperative and efficient style of work, Susan crowned her Whole Earth career with guest editorship of the Spring issue. She will truly be missed.

Replacing Susan is Lori Woolpert, who first worked here during the production of the *Essential Whole Earth Catalog*, before returning to her home state of Kansas. We lured her back to Whole Earth with the promise of lucrative salary, outstanding benefits (including witch protection insurance) and a replacement for her dog Toto.

Susan was known for her extraordinary ability to do two things at once. Here she is seen manipulating the reduction wheel while conducting electronic surveillance on the editorial offices of the magazine in hopes of picking up clues as to the contents of the issue currently in production.

This issue of the Newsletter was created by Richard Schauffler with the kind assistance of our new MITA 2-color reducing/enlarging copier, which is solely responsible for its contents.

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